

## LOST SOULS OF THE 'JAZZ AGE' - REVISITING F. SCOTT FITZGERALD'S

### *THE BEAUTIFUL AND DAMNED (1922)*

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#### ABSTRACT

*The melding of fact and fiction involves the writer both as a realist and a visionary. The writer must become that paradox, of seeing the ordinary with a conscious insight thus creating a vision linked with a larger meaning. This is how history reaches its culmination in the services of art, when experiences look to literature for their ideal. A sort of order is imposed on the jumbled experience of the writer. It is an ordering of the material of life into the material of art. Fiction becomes a celebration of this achievement- the creation of fiction from friction. F. Scot Fitzgerald, who has himself, invented the term 'The Jazz Age', as an individual and an artist with his relentless observation of time has brilliantly recorded it in his works. But his novels don't stop just at this but proceed to open up windows that show a vision encapsulating an eternal universal truth.*

*The Beautiful and Damned (1922) has been set in the year 1920-22. This was just after the war and the pent up energy of youth was gushing forward to be spent and misspent. It presents the lives and philosophies of the Eastern rich when the Jazz Age had just begun its rise. The novel represents an expression of this rebelliousness of youth that ended up desperate and degraded. It shows how the young people of the "lost generation" of the 20's glowed "beautifully" in a mirage which they mistook as their universe and were ultimately "damned." An illusion was taken to be the reality and so, the very basis of their perception was distorted.*

*The paper focuses on how history in the hands of Fitzgerald ceases to be just a bland recital of dates and events but acquires a greater significance by becoming a matter of interpretation that reveals a moral permanence.*

**KEYWORDS:** Treatment of History, The Jazz Age & Moral Permanence

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#### INTRODUCTION

The melding of fact and fiction involves the writer both as a realist and a visionary. The writer must become that paradox, of seeing the ordinary sights with a conscious insight thus creating a vision linked with a larger meaning. This is how history reaches its culmination in the services of art, when experiences look to literature for their ideal. A sort of order is imposed on the jumbled experience of the writer. It is an ordering of the material of life into the material of art. Fiction becomes a celebration of this achievement- the creation of fiction from friction. Fitzgerald defined the art of fiction as, "reporting the extreme things as if they were the average things will start you on the art of fiction" (Berger: 86). The characters in his novels were the people around him. He shared with them their expectations and wept their defeat and his tears rolled down to crystallize into universal expressions of art. Fitzgerald, who himself had invented the term 'the Jazz Age', as an individual and an artist with his relentless observation of time also brilliantly recorded it. But his novels don't stop just at this but proceed to open up windows that show a vision encapsulating an eternal universal truth.

*The Beautiful and Damned* (1922) was set in the year 1920-22. It was the time when “a whole race” was “going hedonistic, deciding on pleasure” (Fitzgerald 1974:59). It decided on pleasure, being tired of the “Great Causes” and this was just after the war and the pent up energy of youth was gushing forward to be spent and misspent. It presents the lives and philosophies of the Eastern rich when the Jazz Age had just begun its rise. *The Beautiful and Damned* represents an expression of this rebelliousness of youth that ended up desperate and degraded.

The novel shows how the young people of the “lost generation” of the 20’s glowed “beautifully” in a mirage which they mistook as their universe and were ultimately “damned.” An illusion was taken to be the reality and so, the very basis of their perception was distorted. They were dedicated to false ideals and Anthony and Gloria embody this spirit of the age. By using such characters, Fitzgerald transformed for us the aura of his period. The novel was first called *The Flight of the Rocket*, and Fitzgerald told his publisher that its subject was based on

The life of Anthony Patch between his 25<sup>th</sup> and 33<sup>rd</sup> years (1913-1921). He is one of those many with the tastes and weaknesses of an artist but with no actual creative inspiration. How he and his beautiful young wife are wrecked on the shores of dissipation is told in the story. (Mizener 1951 :123)

So, *The Beautiful and Damned* too, like all the other novels of Fitzgerald, embodies the many different themes of the human mind with all its nuances. It was the time when people celebrated life in gay abandon and no manners or morals restricted their gaiety. In such an atmosphere it would not have been a difficult task for Fitzgerald to find his themes and characters. The generation living for the moment with the impetus of money, did not realize the deceptiveness of the dreams, the impossibility of evading reality through illusions or the painful destructiveness of time. They felt that they could seize the fleeting minute and capture it for the rest of their lives in its different hues. This was the romantic temper Fitzgerald shared with his characters in *The Beautiful and Damned* who experience the pleasure and the agony of the eventual disenchantment of romanticizing. Fitzgerald feels a need to pass a moral judgment on Anthony, Gloria and many others like them living their glamorous and careless lives. He reveals the hidden faces of failure and defeat. He exposes the core of meaninglessness of life and the tragic sense prevailing beneath it. The theme of the novel is set amidst aspiration, struggle and failure. Fitzgerald wrote:

All the stories that came into my head had a touch of disaster in them, the lovely young creatures in my novels went to ruin, the diamond mountains of my short stories blew up, my millionaires were as beautiful and damned as Thomas Hardy’s peasants. (Fitzgerald 1974:87)

Woven into this thematic pattern of the novel is the motif of the futility of life. Though Anthony believes in this, he still wants to pave his way towards the inherited wealth, which actually holds nothing but disaster for him. Anthony embodies Fitzgerald’s philosophy of “holding in balance the sense of the futility of effort and the sense of the necessity to struggle; the conviction of the inevitability of failure and still the determination to succeed” (Fitzgerald 1974:70).

The intention to ‘succeed’ was derived from a feeling of loss due to the First World War and the traumatic aftermath felt by the contemporary society. In such a tumultuous social context, the designations of ‘success’ were redefined. The war wrenched the writers away not only from the land of the childhood but also from tradition. Spiritual nothingness followed this physical isolation. This was the background for their sense of negation and loss. They were lost between the two worlds, the world of tradition and the modern world of war in which tradition was but a waning force. In the words of Cowley they had a “feeling of having lived on two different planets” (Cowley: vii).

The generation of the 20's felt deceived by the pre-war generation. Instead of opening new avenues in life, what the war left was disillusionment and cynicism. And so, a mood of rebellion was soon created. They lost faith in the older generation because, the promised stability after the war proved to be a lie. They celebrated this loss of faith and the victory of their disrespect by turning to Bohemianism or, "a gay disorderliness of life, cheerful bad manners, and no fixed hours of sexual standards" (Hoffman:39).

An extension of this Bohemianism was expatriation. It was not a forced but a willing exile. In fact, some felt exiled even while living at home. It was an exile of the spirit and soul. They felt that by freeing themselves from their own country, they could seek freedom from life's responsibilities. This gave them a chance to believe that they could start life all over again. So far, they had been repressed by the Victorian taboos and were made to conform to rigid standards. The war and its aftermath unleashed a revolt among the younger generation, now searching for relief and forgetfulness in drink, love and violence in a futile attempt to overcome its boredom. They took part in the frenzy of the immediate post-war boom years and the inevitable result was a moral and an economic collapse.

The wartime atmosphere allowed them to break all the codes. It was a 'free-for-all,' where they found quick justifications. Prohibition was imposed and as a result, bootlegging made its way. Easy money poured in and this prosperity gave way to parties where all their ethics were drowned in gin cocktails. This was taken to be victory over suppression and for this "the Freudian psychology provided a philosophical justification" (Cowley: 65). The post-war generation wanted to extend the music of the jazz as far as possible. It carried with it the impulse of change and excitement. The feeling was that if this music ceased, they were assured of another party elsewhere, a promise that kept them going. If they worked, they worked out of desperation. It was to assert their individuality and identity through earning a social rank. Equipped with riches and nothing much to do, they led a life of glitter and thrill. They were not answerable to the ethics of culture and tradition. Culture and tradition were non-existent in the vacuum they had created around themselves. Disillusioned with the abstract ideals after the war, what mattered now was a kind of personal heroism. This was the ladder through which this generation wanted to reach the loftiest place on the social scale. They did not know nor wished to know their place in the mysterious hierarchy of human worth. The resources were drawn from the society to gratify the self.

Its fresh appeal lost in this decade, the American dream seemed empty, only filled by the hollow beliefs of the age. "Fraternity" meant nothing; "liberty," was misunderstood and the "pursuit of happiness," meant a pursuit of pleasure." The brightness of the Jazz Age had a blinding effect on its people. It took time for the dark shadows to be revealed. The age also witnessed the liberation of women, leading to the rise of feminism. Fitzgerald captured this mood of feminist zeal as the "flapper" of the decade, who craved a niche for herself in the social history. She represented the newly emancipated unconventional woman, who shared the same economic and moral equality with men. She exercised the same freedom as the men in drinking, smoking and in taking or dismissing lovers. The flapper represented the spirit of the jazz age into which she was born: dazzling and inviting. Marriage had no meaning in her world in which everything could be converted into currency; the union of bodies never evolved as the union of souls. She was the mirage to which her heroes ran trying to seek her. Such was the authentic appeal of the 20s flapper that she did not remain a factual contribution of the jazz age but became immortalized through her counterparts captured in the literature of the period.

## DISCUSSIONS

In *This Side of Paradise*, Amory wants to enter paradise with all his adolescent hopes, but in *The Beautiful and Damned*, Anthony wants to escape the pervading hell. Amory is on his way to becoming another Anthony to be damned. Amory is a quester of the meaning of life. Anthony wants to use his philosophy of “meaninglessness of life” to live a life of materialistic complacency, of being “gracefully idle” (Fitzgerald 1922:65). He wants wealth but not through the hard way. His use of wealth is to provide himself with a gilded convenience to live his life of irresponsibility.

Anthony despises his grandfather because Adam Patch represents the old American traditions of hard work and moral righteousness that Anthony has rejected. He feels that he is self-sufficient and this is expressed in his skepticism towards work and effort of any kind. He says: “I do nothing, for there’s nothing I can do that’s worth doing I don’t understand why people think that every young man ought to go to down- town and work ten hours a day for the best twenty years of his life at dull, unimaginative work ” (Fitzgerald 1922:65). The same lethargic feeling is shared by Gloria who says, “I don’t see why they should; in fact it always astonishes me when anybody does anything” (Fitzgerald 1922:66). Anthony and Gloria have no fixed goals or ideals. All they want to do is prolong their youth to its utmost capacity. They detest industry and substitute their boredom with spurious excitements. Anthony feels that he is superior to a man who has labored for his success. He prefers to stay idle and if that meant failure, his vanity transforms it into a virtue: “I might fail where a lesser man would succeed (Fitzgerald 1922:36)

In this smug and sterile cocoon of their world, Anthony and Gloria save themselves from the ugliness of sweat but little do they realize that they are also negating the vitality of life. This is one of the many ways through which they have started degrading themselves. Their refusal to exert themselves towards a goal, to “sweat,” meant less money. But money is the fuel with which their glossy moment glows. And if their fast lives slow down, all their identity and meaning fade. This wealth which could make such a difference in their lives also could prove ironical as money carries its seeds of reward and degeneration.

The society in which Anthony is placed aggravates his wrong ideals and notions. In this incipient and dangerous but apparently comfortable environment, Anthony has nothing better to do except nourish the Narcissus in him and it is his self-love which Anthony cannot transcend. In the same way, Gloria too is in love with herself. This could have been one of the many reasons for the wreck of their married life. Anthony is satisfied to see his image in the golden mirrors and polished surfaces of his house. His retreat is the bath-tub. He floats in the water and builds castles in the air. This helps him to dissolve his social responsibilities in the dreamy atmosphere of narcissistic haze. It is a pity that his handsome physical appearance serves him as an assurance. He never has the time to ponder about the dignity of the self, which is more important, than the mere physical beauty. All that he understands is, “Glancing in a mirror, he was glad to find his skin had not discoloured,” and “he fancied that he had never looked so well” (Fitzgerald 1922:37).

Anthony and Gloria love leisure as much as they love themselves. This may be the way they try to escape from the dreariness of life. M. Sivaram – Krishna called this escape dream, “an escape which involved not only a longing for freedom from activity but also from the very conception of limit” (Sivaram Krishna 1978:74).

Gloria Gilbert is the golden girl. She appears just before the war in the American social life to be crowned with the title of “flapper” after the war. She represents the significant contribution of Fitzgerald to the social history of the times. In the words of Sergio Perosa, Gloria is “a new, more dangerous, incarnation of the “debutante” or “flapper,” both

careless and fascinating" (Perosa:38). She is "the most celebrated and sought after young beauty in the country," (Fitzgerald 1922:81). The laxity of rules and morals in the society of the time give birth to many such Gloria Gilberts. It was a world of show, sham and tinsel in which such people like Gloria Gilberts reveled. She is the embodied summation of all the excitement and radiance that her world provided.

Gloria 'glorifies' herself and expects the world to revolve around her. She delights in the attention paid to her accepting it as her due and also in the envy that she arouses in others. She too is unable to rise above herself. The only meaning in life is to have fun at any cost. She drowns herself in so much self-gratification just to save herself from boredom and the reality of the passing time. She has no ambitions except to be an active player in the jazz game that was on: "She dances all afternoon and all night, until ... she's going to wear herself to a shadow" (Fitzgerald 1922:39). She lives with the illusion of staying young forever. The thought of getting old terrifies her. She hates all responsibilities. For her, life is reduced to chewing gum drops, taking care of the tan on her legs or "adjusting of some stray wisps of hair in the elevator mirror" (Fitzgerald 1922:109). She is utterly engrossed in the worship of her own beauty. For her marriage means a "live, lovely glamorous performance" (Fitzgerald 1922:147) in which she plays the central role. She wants her husband to be a "temporarily passionate lover," to whom she would like to be the "permanent mistress" (Fitzgerald 1922:158).

This was the society, where, a woman could not accept her material status with dignity but craved for a relationship which had only a physical bond as its base. The responsibilities of marriage were beyond the comprehension of people like Gloria. In the words of Fitzgerald, Gloria and Anthony "are representatives. They are two of the great army of the rootless who float around New York. There must be thousands ..." (Fitzgerald 1922:351). These depraved people come together in marriage "the radiant hour," which is expected to last for only a while, till their mutual infatuation lasted. When the "idyll" begins to fade, the only thing that was holding them together was a new dream, perhaps that of an expected inheritance. But, they are deceived by their sense of anticipation and they burn themselves out with their riotous living. Youth is their reservoir, from which they draw and spend immediately. So it is no surprise that the ultimate tragedy for Gloria is the discovery of a premature wrinkle!

The "idyll" of marriage gradually loses its gloss for Gloria and Anthony and in the light of reality each discovers the imperfections of the other. There are of course, essential differences hidden beneath their facile compatibility and their shared desire for graceful idleness. For a time they share romantic illusions of love and beauty, until the egos nourished by these illusions clash and each feels that life is meaningless without self-gratification. They purchase an old grey house in the country. Their dream is that Anthony would write a history of The Middle Ages (Fitzgerald 1922:15), and Gloria would be pampered by "some angelic servant." They are beguiled by this illusion and the "passion of their pretense creates the actuality" (Fitzgerald 1922:178). The actuality that Gloria rejects is her procreative ability. She dreads motherhood and its consequences of having "wide hips" and becoming "pale" with all "her freshness gone and no radiance in her hair" (Fitzgerald 1922:203). She refuses the boon of procreation and fruitfulness for a life of self-centered ease based upon the laxity of values.

Anthony and Gloria can never turn to each other. In fact, they have come together to get away from each other. This is the reason why they always want people and fun around them. This exposes their failure to find in each other enduring resources. In fact, their union would have broken off but for their mutual attraction for parties, drinking and spending. In the words of John W. Aldridge, "the crumbling, structure is not only a marriage. It is Fitzgerald's vision of

paradise as well, going down in the dissolution of an age” (Aldridge:48). For instance, a song sung in one of parties is a reflection of the times: “*The pan-ic-has-come over us, so ha-a-as-the moral decline*” (Fitzgerald 1922:238). In this world of ‘panic and physical pleasures,’ Anthony and Gloria find themselves trapped in a meaningless way of life.

The visit of Anthony’s grandfather, Adam Patch adds to this confusion. He is an ardent supporter of Prohibition and he interrupts the couples when they are on a drunken spree. Suddenly the couple is reduced to poverty, being disinherited by the old man. This poverty is only a belated assertion of their existing emotional poverty. Adam Patch keeps a close watch on them while they are unconsciously preparing their ruin. So their expectations, built on weak foundations, collapse. Only when the lethargy of the dream has turned into a nightmare, Anthony realizes that “He had been futile in longing to drift and dream; on one drifted except to maelstroms, no one dreamed, without his dreams becoming fantastic lightness of indecision and regret ” (Fitzgerald 1922:282).

But this is only an impulsive and temporary feeling. They immediately plan and attach themselves to the hope of winning back the inheritance legally. This, however, adds to the inner tensions of their increasing differences with each other and finally destroys their serenity. Both of them want to find substitutes for their unhappiness and they “faced one another idiotically, each of them unable to impress the other, each of them tremendously aching bored” (Fitzgerald 1922:375).

The desire of becoming a film actress has always been there in Gloria’s mind. She wants to arrest her beauty, youth and glitter in the permanency of the celluloid. This is the inevitable reaction of a person for whom the soul and spirit were one – the beauty of her body was the essence of her soul (Fitzgerald 1922:404). She wants to see that “in some manner the illusion of beauty could be sustained, or preserved perhaps in celluloid after the reality had vanished” (Fitzgerald 1922:393). But, the reality has not vanished which is the futility of misplaced human aspiration. But it is just that, Anthony and Gloria want to overlook it.

Extending the ‘unreal reality’, Anthony welcomes the diversion offered by the war and enlists himself. This constitutes an escape from his own self and his contradictions. He is stationed in a southern military camp where he manages to get himself entangled in a love affair. He has now become weak, drifting and full of self-pity. An impulse has led him into an affair with Dorothy Raycroft. The inevitable result of this affair is his being stripped of his rank. His self-respect is lost and once again he faces the nightmare of helpless frustrating dissatisfaction.

Both Anthony and Gloria continue to cling to their own romantic illusions and when the present intrudes they indulge in hypnogogic alternatives like drinking. They feel that “if living was not purposeful it was, at any rate, essentially romantic! Wine gave a sort of gallantry to their own failure” and that there was the indescribable gloss and glamour it gave, like “the memories of ephemeral and faded evenings” (Fitzgerald 1922:305).

There is however always the ruthless impact of reality and the nameless dread. This is the fear which makes Gloria run insanely during the nightmare episode of the party. Her escape from Joe hull is only a partial identification of this fear. She runs away only to return to the same contaminated atmosphere and there is no other place for her to go. She comes back as her old self: just a “block of ice ... dispirited with life, capable only of one pervasive emotion – fear” (Fitzgerald 1922:278). Fear is, in fact, the pervasive emotion in the book too. There is the fear of growing old, the fear of work, the fear of change and the fear of life itself. In this frightening, meaningless world of *The Beautiful and Damned*, there are others like Maury Noble and Richard Caramel. Maury Noble contributes to the intellectuality of the novel in the

beginning as the “the most unique figure in his class, the most brilliant, the most original-smart, quiet and among the saved” (Fitzgerald 1922:19). But his intelligence is wasted and he has nothing more to contribute to a confused age.

The society has nothing to give Maury except undermining his nobility and dulling his perception of truth. Maury's views are the philosophical center of the book. Maury talks about the “fundamental sophistication,” which he has struggled to attain, that “Anthony never will attain, that Dick will never fully understand” (Fitzgerald 1922:255). A man who has understood the depths of life so well, is changed by the society he lives in. His rambling discourse on religion, literature and philosophy seems pseudo. The chapter is called “Symposium.” The original Platonic Symposium dealt with ideal love and the vision of absolute beauty. But in the modern symposium, Maury argues and asserts that in a purposeless universe the only wisdom is that of cynicism and that beauty has no affinity with truth. This perversion of the Platonic concept was reflected in the perversion of art. Art is valid only when it is seen in the larger context of beauty and truth. But, now Art is for the sake of power, money and egotism, serving debased purposes.

Richard Caramel is another friend of Anthony's. He is an ambitious writer and has enjoyed instant success with his first novel: The Demon Lover. This is a novel about “art for money sake” that is, art adapts itself to the current interests and public taste. So, Maury and Richard who are at first presented as men of promise are seen to have followed the same pattern of deterioration.

In an age of vacuity, these pitiful people did not have anything to rely upon and they drift aimlessly and restlessly. After Anthony and Gloria have contested for the will, through expensive and demoralizing legal battles, the court rules in their favor granting them thirty million dollars. But their greed and egotism have something else in store for them and little do they realize that time waits for none and that it will sweep past everybody. Gloria's beauty has faded prematurely and Anthony has suffered a mental collapse. Are Anthony and Gloria thirty million dollars rich or are they spiritually and emotionally poor, is the question that Fitzgerald has posed at the end which is not the victory of the mind and soul. In this achievement, if it could be called so, they have not only lost many things, but they have also lost themselves. In the words of Anthony:

Desire just cheats you. It's like a sunbeam skipping here and there about a room. It skips and glides some inconsequential object, and we poor fools try to grasp it – but when we do the sunbeam moves on to something else and you've got the inconsequential past, but the glitter that made you want it is gone (Fitzgerald 1922:341).

So, Anthony and Gloria have not only lost their youth, but also their spirituality. Gloria who “wanted to exist only as a conscious flower, prolonging and preserving itself” (Fitzgerald 1922:393) remains a “flapper.” Maury Noble and Richard Caramel too, succumb to popular taste and petty whims. In the end, Anthony and Gloria sail for Europe, too weak physically and emotionally to enjoy their victory. The fate of this unhappy couple dramatizes the moral of Fitzgerald's epigraph: “The victor belongs to the spoils.” But there is also a glimpse of Fitzgerald, the romantic. (Cross: 113).

In the search for happiness, which search is the greatest and possibly the only crime of which we in our petty misery are capable, these two people were mastered as guilty chiefly by the freshness and fullness of their desire. Their disillusion was always a comparative thing – they had sought glamour and colour through their respective worlds with steadfast loyalty sought it and it alone in kisses and in wine, sought it with the same tenuousness in the wanton moonlight as under of inviolate chastity. Their fault was not that they had doubted but that they had believed. (Fitzgerald 1922:344)

These empathetic words say it all. The misplaced strength of holding on to vacuity in spite of their inability to rise beyond their romantic selves amidst the sweeping changes of the times is the saddest aspect. Thus Fitzgerald a “divided – self,” with a “double-vision” (Kazin: 152), justifies his romantic characters. There is a choice offered in the title itself that reflects the conflicting motive. Anthony and Gloria are “damned” and they cannot be “beautiful.” This story seems to recall the romantic zeal which Fitzgerald and Zelda too hard shared. In the words of Charles E. Shain, “their married life was a continual source of both the ‘romance’ and the moral education out of which his best fiction came” (Shain: 20). In the first experience of early success, Fitzgerald and Zelda too had indulged in a way of life not too different from that of Anthony and Gloria. In a world full of possibilities, life for them was a pleasure ride. Fitzgerald’s heroes and heroines too borrowed this spirit of gay abandon. But the moralist in Fitzgerald had concluded the lives of his fictive characters differently. In the words of Milton R. Stern: “Both Anthony patch and Jay Gatsby enact the death of possibility: but as Gatsby is the hero, Patch is just the corpse” (Stern: 121). The anxiety and anguish of the modernist writer split between the self and society and was suffocated amidst the wasted zeal.

Fitzgerald, himself a typical product of this age, sympathized with his characters. In *The Beautiful and Damned* he showed Anthony’s and Gloria’s decay and defeat. But he also defended to the very end the greatness of their struggle. Anthony is Fitzgerald’s “character in decay,” “one who yields and wins,” without resisting and failing. Anthony exclaims at the end: “It was a hard fight, but I didn’t give up and I came through (Fitzgerald 1922:449).

## CONCLUSIONS

In Fitzgerald’s hands history ceases to be just a bland recital of dates and events but it acquires greater significance by becoming a matter of interpretation. Facts do not remain facts but provoke the historian within the novelist to fit them into his study of human life and experience and his assumptions about man’s quest for fulfillment and happiness. Fitzgerald did exactly this, when he took the facts out of their chronological order irrespective of their relative importance. The result was a rearrangement of the past for explaining and lending support in understanding not just the contemporary situation but the essence of the human fact as a whole. He passed through the ‘Americanness’ to ultimately give us the essence of human reality. The American reality provided him only the fictional possibility, to achieve universality.

The moral permanence which he was seeking through his novels seemed to have eluded him in life. Fitzgerald too had been swayed by the winds of the Jazz Age and in a way, his novels constitute a process of self-examination. He was not only examining himself but also an America that had lost its standards and its sense of the moral fitness of things while exhausting itself in a self-deceiving myth. Fitzgerald too was one among the victims of this deception. His agonizing experiences were transferred to his characters. Once, he had wondered about this correspondence: “I don’t know whether Zelda and I are real or whether we are characters in one of my novels” (cited by Cowley 1974:30). Fitzgerald’s fiction seems to have born of his autobiographical expression. Through the novels could be traced, the adolescent Fitzgerald in Amory Blaine in *This Side of Paradise*; Fitzgerald shares his youth with Anthony Patch in *The Beautiful and Damned*; Fitzgerald who wanted to buy his Zelda becomes Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby*. Fitzgerald, the moralist peeps through Nick’s character, who is the moral center of the novel. He is also Dick Diver in *Tender is the Night*. The novel depicts through Dick, Fitzgerald’s own turmoil of living with a sick wife. And in *The Last Tycoon*, Stahr represents Fitzgerald, trying to create a moral order. The incompleteness of the novel is, up to an extent, symbolic of Fitzgerald’s premature death.



Anthony and Gloria and all the other characters have no real purpose in life and this way of life has no method. They are unknowingly trapped by the society around them. Edmund Wilson, in this regard, says:

In such a civilization, the sanest and the most creditable thing is to forget organized society and live for the jazz of the moment. And it is not altogether a personal confusion which has produced the confusion of such a book. We must remember the environment and their chief source of stimulation have been the wars, the society, and the commerce of the Age of Confusion itself. (Kazin:183)

In this "Age of Confusion," Anthony and Gloria are happy blowing bubbles. In Gloria's own words, "we blew such beautiful ones to-day, and they'll explode and then we'll blow more and more,... until all the soap and water is used up" (Fitzgerald 1922:147). Not only is the soap and water used up, but also Anthony and Gloria. They are so beautiful, they are bubbles themselves.

In Fitzgerald's words, the Jazz Age "... was an age of miracles, it was an age of art, it was an age of excess, and it was an age of satire." (Fitzgerald: 1931: 2) Out of this restlessness of time, arose Fitzgerald's generative artistic impulse that says more than it shows. His sad lessons have come from human stories that carry an ability to empower our thinking even in today's world.

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